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S E C R E T TEGUCIGALPA 001592

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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/PPC, AND WHA/CEN  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/01/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [EPET](#) [PINR](#) [HQ](#) [VZ](#)

SUBJECT: HONDURAS DEMARCHED ON VENEZUELA; MFA SEES GOV AS  
LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT, BUT ONE THAT MEDDLES IN REGION

REF: A. STATE 127251

1B. TEGUCIGALPA 886 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Paul Tuebner;  
Reasons 1.5 (B) and (D).

11. (S) Acting PolChief delivered ref A talking points on Venezuela to MFA Acting Director General (A/DG) of Foreign Relations Alan Javier Oviedo Garcia during a meeting July 19. After A/PolChief gave the demarche, Oviedo stated that the Government of Honduras (GOH) isn't quite sure how to respond to the issue since Chavez has been elected by the people and his government is still recognized by all countries. A/PolChief reiterated that the USG recognizes Venezuela's democratic legitimacy but emphasized that the U.S. Government has serious concerns about the Government of Venezuela's (GOV) recent actions and comments about the U.S. and hemispheric issues. A/PolChief also expressed U.S. concern over recent accusations and stories of GOV funding of anti-government parties and movements within various countries of Central and South America. Oviedo registered some surprise at the strong language of the demarche and the information contained within it, especially the decrease in U.S.-Venezuela cooperation on narco-trafficking and anti-terrorism. A/PolChief reiterated the U.S. Government's strong support for democracy and the governments of the region. Oviedo stated that the GOH hopes that diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Venezuela do not end, since this would leave Honduras in a bad position. He also expressed concern over the possible election of an ally of Chavez in Nicaragua, and how this will affect relations in Central America between the U.S. and other countries. However, he also expressed the GOH's strong preference for relations with the U.S. in case diplomatic ties between the U.S. and Venezuela should come to an end in the future. He noted that Chavez is a democratically-elected President and that GOH maintains a relationship with the GOV, but assured A/PolChief that Honduras is progressing in terms of democratic values and looks more to the North than to the South.

12. (S) COMMENT: It seems that the MFA is walking the Organization of American States line here. Chavez and the GOV are democratically elected and therefore are somewhat sacrosanct. In addition, their oil makes Honduras tread lightly, despite the fact that less than five percent of total Honduran petroleum imports come from Venezuela. The lines get a little more murky when Chavez' activities in the region and support of fringe anti-government groups are discussed (see ref B). Chavez' machismo against the U.S. is a source of pride for some Honduran leftists. The powers that be within the GOH sometimes use U.S. concerns over Venezuela and Cuba to exaggerate the threat they pose to sway U.S. policy in their favor. As stated in ref B, alleged GOV funding of leftist groups in Honduras has yet to be proved, but conferences and political diatribes do suggest close coordination with at least one anti-government group, the Popular Block, which is linked to the leftist UD Party. If GOV funding of anti-government activities could be definitively proved to the GOH, GOH acceptance of GOV and Chavez would greatly diminish, if not disappear. Post is concerned that during this election season possible GOV funding of leftist groups could have a negative effect on the democratic process in Honduras. END COMMENT.  
Tuebner